

# Death at Suppertime

*Phyllis McGinley*

*Between the dark and the daylight,  
When the night is beginning to lower,  
Comes a pause in the day's occupation,  
That is known as the Children's Hour.<sup>1</sup>*

Then endeth the skipping and skating,  
The giggles, the tantrums, and tears,  
When, the innocent voices abating,  
Alert grow the innocent ears.

The little boys leap from the stairways,      5  
Girls lay down their dolls on the dot,  
For promptly at five o'er the airways  
Comes violence geared to the tot.

Comes murder, comes arson, come G-men      10  
Pursuing unspeakable spies;  
Come gangsters and tough-talking he-men  
With six-shooters strapped to their thighs;

Comes the corpse in the dust, comes the dictum      15  
"Ya' better start singin', ya' rat!"  
While the torturer leers at his victim,  
The killer unleashes his gat.

With mayhem the twilight is reeling.  
Blood spatters; the tommy guns bark.  
Hands reach for the sky or the ceiling  
As the dagger strikes home in the dark.      20

And lol with what rapturous wonder  
The little ones hark to each tale  
Of gambler shot down with his plunder  
Or outlaw abducting the mail.

*Between the news and the tireless      25  
Commercials, while tempers turn sour,  
Comes a season of horror by wireless  
That is known as the Children's Hour.*